

Matt Bianco - Hifi Bossanova (2009)

Written by bluesever

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1. *Hifi Bossanova* (4:24) 2. *Lost In You (Revisited)* (4:42) 3. *Natural* (4:28) 4. *Don't Look Back* (4:27) 5. *Always On My Mind* (4:31) 6. *The Way I Like It* (3:59) 7. *Ba-De-Ah* (4:43) 8. *Someone Else's Dream* (3:55) 9. *Anna-Marie* (4:04) 10. *Angel Divine* (4:13) 11. *Matt's Chill* (3:49) Nick Cohen - Bass Simon Finch - Flugelhorn, Trumpet Mark Fisher - Keyboards, Melodica, Piano Weston Foster - Drum Programming, Vocals (Background) Rômulo Gomes - Bass Hazel Sims - Vocals, Vocals (Background) Kym Mazelle - Vocals Mark Reilly - Vocals, Vocals (Background), Vocoder Tony Remy - Guitar, Vocoder Andrew Ross - Flute, Saxophone Ricardo Silveira – Guitar Well I'd like to think I fly in a kind of retro style, well I've heard it all before but I'm feeling it again.

This is the first line of the first track on Matt Bianco's new album *Hifi Bossanova* and pretty much sums the album up in one contorted sentence. After the short lived reunion of the original line up for 'Matt's Mood' (which, in my humble opinion was nothing but a calculated move by Basia to give her non existing career a shot in the arm) the new album has reunited the duo of Mark Reilly and Mark Fisher. Those two shaped the sound of this band over the decades and should by all means be regarded as Matt Bianco proper.

Interestingly, this is the first collaboration of those two in 7 years since they released *Echoes*. But this time things are different: they have secured a contract with big German independent label 'Edel' and will be releasing their new oeuvre in Europe and the UK (if I remember correctly this is the first UK release since 1991's 'Samba in Your Casa') while their trusty label in Japan – JVC-Victor – will release *Hifi Bossanova* in Asia. There will even be a tour. So all the portents point to a commercial success. But, what is it actually like?

Well, it's different. Not different as in 'Aaargh, that's terrible', no, just different from their last records. They have shed what I call their 'e-Latino' sound (all uptempo drum loops, housey hihats and claptraps) and have returned ironically to the more acoustic feel of the first MB album back in 1984. You could call it "Stan Getz and Joao Gilberto meet Baden Powell in 1984 in a cafe where they're playing Steely Dan in the background". Makes sense? It's not as catchy as their previous albums: Every MB record in the past had some songs that you were able to

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hum instantly (Fire, 'Cha Cha Cuba' and 'Lost in you' come to mind), but this time things are a bit more grown up, more sophisticated. You could even call it Sophistipop. The percussion and drums are more organic, more midtempo and chugging along nicely in the background (it's not all bossanova, though). The melodies are more complex and grow more slowly on you than in the previous albums. It certainly takes a little while to get used to the different harmonics and singing/whistling/humming along to it takes you a little bit longer than usual. Which is not necessarily a bad thing as you just want to listen to it more and more. Now don't think that Fisher and Reilly are reinventing the wheel with this: there are still plenty of the usual MB ingredients: plenty of vocodered 'boom chicka chicka' sounds, there is some 'te tumba'-ing (in the bossanova'd version of 'Lost in you') and 'ah – be da' ing going on and Mark Reilly's lyrics are, well, still Mark Reilly's lyrics. There is also plenty to hear from their female vocalist Hazel Sim who sounds so much more appropriate for this material than Basia (less pathos is often a good thing) and gels well with Mark Reilly's timbre. Highlights of the album are the title track, 'Always on my mind' (no, not another Elvis cover) and the divine 'Someone else's dream' and yes, there is the odd stinker as well, but after listening to the thing for 5 days almost continuously I can happily say that I am delighted with it. This is the first Matt Bianco album in which Fisher and Reilly must have said 'sod the teenage market' and focussed on their core audience of men and women 'of a certain age' (middle class geezers and ladies in their late thirties and above).

Well, there's certainly plenty of us around who will gladly shell out money for this gem of an album. Let it be all over the charts and I'm already looking forward to the tour. Well done, chaps.

--- Fordiebianco, messagedfromtheouthouse.com

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